

this time. Upon completing the house, the owner gives a party for those who helped him. During the last day of work, with the party scheduled for the evening, the workmen strive feverishly to complete the house on time. This is a party to celebrate a task completed. Sake flows freely. Occasionally on the last day, a man walks around the house talking to himself and throws salt toward the inside of the house. His words are not formalized and not known to his hearers. After finishing throwing the salt, he bangs the back of the house three times with a stick. This custom is said to be gradually disappearing, and is only occasionally practiced in Matsuda.⁹

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In Hanashiro, there is a similar custom that differs in details. On the date the house is started, there is a small ceremony. A plate containing boiled rice, bean curd, a kind of fritter (tempura in Japanese) and meat, together with a flask of sake are placed in the center of the site on which the house is to be built. Prayers are offered that the house be a good one. The ceremony of raising the roof is identical with that previously described in Matsuda. This applies only to the raising of the ridge pole, no ceremonies taking place with the erecting of the side poles. The center board, near to or nailed to the ridge pole, and from which the articles wrapped in a leaf or in sea weed are suspended, is inscribed with the word, shibiranka. Its meaning is unknown to me. One villager said it was the name of a legendary Chinese protector of houses.

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In one instance from Minatogawa, instead of the salt, charcoal, and bean paste, only a bit of charcoal (tsumi in Japanese) was suspended and wrapped in seaweed (kombu in Japanese).

About 20 years ago in Hanashiro, the celebration on the day of completion was much more elaborate than now. A pig was killed, fish purchased, and a large feast was prepared to which the whole village was invited. The celebration now is confined to relatives, friends, and helpers, including the carpenter, whether hired or a volunteer.

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In Minatogawa, when a good house is being built, there is the custom of going to a fortune teller (sanjinsō in Japanese) to discover the lucky day for commencing construction. This may be repeated to find the lucky day for putting up the poles and supports or putting on the roof. Here also a son about to establish a branch household and to build his own house takes a food offering to his father's house, places it on the Buddhist god shelf, gives thanks, and prays for good fortune before construction starts. When the house has been completed, similar offerings are made, either before the god shelf of the new house, if it has been installed, or again at the father's house. In this village, the usual observances are confined to the raising of the roof and to the celebration following completion of the home.

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One last custom observed in all the villages is that one does not move into a new house unless the tide is coming in. Other occasions in which the tide is taken into consideration will be discussed later. The idea here seems to be that one moves at times of growing fullness and increase not at times of ebb and withdrawal.

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⁹ I was unable to secure any explanation of the reason for this and the other practices beyond the familiar statement that "it is a custom." (shukan)

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The first naming of children is done at a ceremony on the day of birth, or on the following day, if the birth took place at night. It is known as umbagi. There is a small gathering of relatives. Soup, rice, and a little sake may be served. Ordinary rice or rice cakes (mochigome) may be prepared and put on the Buddhist god shelf. If a boy, the relatives and parents pray for his strength, if a girl for her good health. Umbagi, an Okinawan word, is also known as sūchūsan no iwai (Japanese). The ceremony precedes the burying of the afterbirth.

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One important element in the naming of a child on its day of birth is the state of the tide. The child is named only if the tide is coming in. It is not necessary that the tide be high. Perhaps midpoint is the best, though high tide is considered good. Practically everyone can calculate the time when the tide is coming in or out; since they all know the lunar calendar with a cycle completed in 15 days, it is a simple calculation.⁶ The explanation always given for calculating the tide on this and other occasions is that when the tide is coming in, fortune and happiness will enter in the new life or the new situation. When the tide is ebbing, everything goes out and away.

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The real celebration of the birth of a child occurs several days after birth. It usually occurs on the 5th or 6th day counting the birth day. This is known as mansan (Okinawan) and is in honor of the good health of the mother and the child. In Japanese, it is also called muikajari.⁷ In all communities studied, the week long all night celebration has disappeared, though the celebration of mansan might last well into the night.

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One celebration, observed in Hinatogawa, is probably typical of the thousands that take place every year in rural Okinawa. The guests came early in the evening to the parents' home, or, as in this case, to the home of the child's grandfather, since the father, a first son, lived in his parents' home. The men sat in the first room (ichibansa), the women in the second (nibansa), following custom in parties in which both sexes are present. The head of the house, the grandfather, sat in front of the alcove (tokonoma) of the first room. The child's father sat next to him. Each guest went on his knees, bowed, congratulated the father and presented him with a small money gift. The usual gift is about 120. This was accepted by the father, who then responded with a short speech. Sometimes these are formal and stiff, sometimes like a simple conversation. The guests also congratulated the

6 The method of computing times of high and low tide will be given later. The tide is important in the marriage ceremony, when moving into a new house, or when moving, in the case of a second or succeeding son, from a main house to establish a branch family, and at a child's party on the first anniversary of its birth.

7 The day was variously given me as 4-5th, 6th, and 7th day after birth. Muika in muikajari means 6th day.

585 following the marriage, There is another ceremony, ^{The day} this time for relatives and perhaps a few close friends. The couple go to the bride's house where there is food and sake. This means the husband has really and finally accepted the daughter of the house and is thanking her parents for her.

But these events also are not observed uniformly. On the second day, there may be a gathering of friends and relatives, to be followed on the next day by visits of the bride, groom, and the groom's friends and relatives to the bride's home to give thanks for receiving the girl in marriage.

585 268 The food served at weddings depends on the economic circumstances of the family. But at today's prices food which would be considered acceptable costs at least ¥100 per person including sake. This feast had many extras and consisted of a buckwheat (soba) noodle soup, slices of beef and pork, eggs, tempura, a fritter without a fish or meat filling, sweet potatoes, a vegetable salad of raw radish, green onion and sea weed shoots, bean curd, a boiled fish paste, rice cakes, and a sweet round fritter (sato tempura) very much resembling the drugnut in taste, various cakes, and a sponge cake (kasutera).

585 [823] The marriage ceremony is performed only when the tide is coming in, for the same reasons that were noted with the birthday celebration of the child. Marriage is a time of bounty and fulfillment, not of diminution and withdrawal.

585 114 There was a "very ancient" Okinawan custom, cited by Spencer on the authority of Shimabuku Genkichi, the student of Okinawan history, of the bride remaining in the home of her parents even after marriage, and the husband coming to her home to spend the nights with her. This Spencer ascribed to the high economic value of the woman and the custom at the time of Spencer's writing (1931) was still said to exist in parts of the northern district (Kunigami) of Okinawa.³ The temporary return of the wife to her home after her marriage, while the husband went to a public brothel was also an old custom.⁴

585 184 The preceding description of a wedding ceremony in Matsuda may be compared with one seen in Gushichan village close to Hanashiro. (Rural weddings are not so easy to see as one might think. There may be only one or two in a year in a village; when the parties are from different villages, the number in any one village is also reduced). In this

³ Spencer, as cited, 96. In my studies at Matsuda (which is in the Kunigami district) and in visits to Oku on the extreme northern part of the island, I did not encounter any indication of the survival of this custom. But unfortunately I was unaware of their previous existence and there may well be survivals in some of the villages.

⁴ Simon, Beitrage zur Kenntnis der Riukiu-Inseln, 97.

discounting the idea that it was a sign of nervousness or of being ill at ease. Certainly it occurs equally with strangers, relatives and life-long friends, and it may well be nothing more than an extremely common mannerism. 157

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The Tide

Scattered throughout the previous discussion there have been references to the importance of reckoning the tide on certain occasions. At these times, it is necessary that it either be high tide or that the tide is coming in. Though doubtless there are many more instances than have been mentioned, the following were found to be the most common occasions in which high tide or the beginning of flood tide was considered: (1) The marriage ceremony of san-san-kudo, (2) giving a child a name on its birth date, (3) when moving from a main house to a branch house, (4) when the child is given symbolic gifts at his first birthday party, (5) when carrying salt, the Buddhist god shelf and other articles into a new house. 823 ●

Under these circumstances it is necessary to be able to compute the tide quickly and easily. For this purpose, the lunar month is divided into two periods of 15 days each. From an almanac a figure is obtained which gives the number of hours to be added to 12 o'clock on the first day of the 15 day lunar cycle. This is 0.8 hours or 48 minutes for low tide. (Everyone seems to have this at his finger tips). On the first day of the fifteen day cycle, low tide is 48 minutes after 12 o'clock. High tide is obtained by adding or subtracting 6 hours. The computation is shown in the following table. 805 823

<u>Lunar Day at 12 o'clock</u> (15 day cycle)	<u>multiplied</u> <u>by:</u>	<u>Equals Period</u> <u>of time in</u> <u>Hours to be</u> <u>Added to</u> <u>12 o'clock.</u>	<u>Or, Low Tide</u> <u>at:</u>
1	x 0.8 hrs	0.8 hrs.	12:48
2	x 0.8	1.6	1:36
3	x 0.8	2.4	2:24
4	x 0.8	3.2	3:12
5	x 0.8	4.0	4:00
6	x 0.8	4.8	4:48
7	x 0.8	5.6	5:36
8	x 0.8	6.4	6:24
9	x 0.8	7.2	7:12
10	x 0.8	8.0	8:00
11	x 0.8	8.8	8:48
12	x 0.8	9.6	9:36
13	x 0.8	10.4	10:24
14	x 0.8	11.2	11:12
15	x 0.8	12.0	12:00
16 (or 1)	x 0.8	12.8	12:48

To obtain high tide add or subtract 6 hours.

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577 better behavior. In one instance from Matsuda, the members of the family talk over their good and bad acts and resolve henceforth to do good.

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[823] In all the villages, the custom of new or young water (wakamizu) has survived. In Minatogawa, at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning of the New Year, young children take fresh water in a tea pot to the homes of relatives. The new water is poured into a cup, placed on the Buddhist god shelf, or on the shelf of the fire god in the kitchen. The children are given ¥5 or ¥10 by the relatives, who are then supposed to stay young themselves. In Matsuda, new water is taken from a well early in the morning, and some is put on the god shelf. The first tea of the New Year is made with "young water".

A parent may also give a piece of pork with salt on it to his child announcing that he is now one year older. This custom is still observed, even though ages officially are now reckoned in the western manner.

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[782] In all the villages, the morning observances are family affairs; the public nature of the holiday is evident later. Tea and sake are placed in front of the ancestral tablets on the god shelf. A fresh kimono is put on and the offering is made before breakfast. Then the father takes the sake from the god shelf, offering sips first to his wife and then to the children.

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[793] Later there are visits to the place of the patron deity or first ancestor of the village (ujigami). In Hanashiro, all of the people make this visit. In Minatogawa, it is also a village affair, but is more involved because there are more places to go: a local religious site of unknown origin, the palace of the gods of the sea (ryūgu), the supposed place of the mountain god, the three wells with their god places, and finally to the places of the two patron deities. In Matsuda, the village head man, accompanied by surviving minor priestesses (formerly in the noro order) make visits to the place of the patron deity. But whether all the villagers or only their representatives take part, the visits have the same meaning: to offer thanks to the founders of the village.

The New Year is a time for extended family reunions. If the home site of the extended family is not in the village, the family or a representative may go to the reunion in another village, if it is not too far away. Only members of the extended family attend these celebrations.

[504] With early morning observances in the home, the public ceremonies, and the extended family reunions over, the gay, informal and public part of the holiday begins. Hospitality is offered on all sides, and there is much drinking among the men. The celebration continues for the rest of the first day and through the second. The third day is a transitional day whose theme is the need of returning to work. This is hachibaru (to begin farming). The day is given over to more feasting and drinking and to some actual or token work.

trees of the sacred grove and used old beliefs to preserve the forests. Formerly it was believed that misfortune would come to him who cut a tree in groves sacred to these gods. If the trees were cut, the god would become angry, the person cutting the tree would be the victim of self-induced illness and by worrying about his deed, gradually would become ill, and perhaps die. These sacred groves, whose religious significance is now almost ignored, are arranged to enclose the village from three directions, with the open side on the south. On the north is the sacred grove in the back (ushiro no utaki) or the grove of the white gold mountain (kinpuku utaki in Okinawan). The mountain gods were supposed to live here. On the west was the grove in front (mae no utaki) on the white silver mountain. This was also known as the fire shrine.

The priestesses also had a hand in this worship of the mountain gods. There are about seven of these places of worship now, and there is still a voluntary caretaker, an old woman with tattooed hands, a family priestess (nigami) in the old system. Occasionally one sees an old woman going to a grove to pray. The only other visitors are the farmers who walk along the paths of the grove on their way to the fields.

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Other Religious Observances

There are a few other observations which may have some interest. Old women use patches of grass or knotted rice straw to ward off the spirits on days when they are thought to be abroad in great numbers. At the festival of the autumnal equinox, knotted or braided grass (shiba) is placed in various parts of the house. In some houses, bunches are suspended from the cross beams, perhaps three or four bunches to the side. They may be placed in the toilet, at the entrance to the house compound, on the water barrel in the kitchen, on the front and back of fishing boats, or in the interior of the house. Blades of miscanthus grass may be tied around the neck of a bean paste jug (misogami). Spirits, plentiful at this time, are frightened away by the patches of grass and will not enter. The young, while not believing in this, acquiesce to avoid making the old angry.

When a death anniversary is being celebrated, there may be a blade of miscanthus, a rice straw, or a knotted blade of grass on the top of a box of candies or sweet meats to prevent the intrusion of evil spirits. A blade of grass (the san) is occasionally tied around the handle of a tea pot. For the first week after a family death, tea is served from a pot which has this blade of grass. But these are almost invariably the observances of the old and are only infrequently seen. These customs, observed in Hinatogawa, are said to survive among the very old in the other villages.

In Matsuda, a rice rope (shimenawa) was observed at one home. The rice rope, a Shinto symbol, is not common in Okinawan culture. This